



A Thing or Two to Learn From Our Kids!

Parents spend a majority of their time teaching their children new things. There are a few behaviors, however, parents should not try to change and should in fact pay attention to and learn from.

Eat when you are hungry

It's not as simple as it sounds. Babies are born knowing when they need to eat and how much. As we grow, eating often becomes a reaction to numerous triggers such as stress, anger, boredom, or socializing. It is important for adults to try to regain their hunger instinct by really listening to their bodies. Before eating, ask yourself if you are eating because you *need* to or *want* to.

Stop eating when you are full

Have you ever caught yourself saying, "I'm so stuffed but it is so good I just want to keep eating it?" Babies turn their heads when they are full and children may push your hand away. You, however, may have grown up in a family where cleaning your plate was required before being excused. Unless you are worried that a sudden drought will wipe out our supply of food, stop eating when you are full. Odds are that there will be more available the next time you are hungry.

Being hungry does make you a grouch

Think back to crying, fussy and frustrated babies. Hunger can affect adults the same way.

Snacking is good

Children's bellies are smaller and often need 6 small meals a day. This pattern of eating keeps their metabolism running at full force. Adults should try this as well to kick-start their metabolism.

It's okay to play with your food

Children have the natural tendency to examine, smell, and touch their food. This behavior allows them to thoroughly enjoy their food and get the most out of mealtimes. Adults would benefit from slowing down. You shouldn't be in a hurry to eat or finish your plate. Enjoy the aroma and unique flavors by focusing on eating, rather than some other activity such as watching television, driving, or talking on the phone. Remember it takes your body 20 minutes to realize it is full.

All foods fit

We tend to teach children that some foods are "bad" and others are "good." There are no such things. All foods fit into a healthy diet. Moderation and frequency are what we need to think about.

Become a picky eater again

Children will refuse to eat things they do not like. Don't waste calories on food that tastes only "so-so." Find something you like and enjoy it. However, don't forget to continue to try new things, and enforce the two-bite rule for yourself and your children. Everyone must try everything with at least two bites. If it still is not appealing, set it aside, but try it again the next time it is served. You'll be surprised how much yours and your children's taste buds change from time to time.

Follow the leader



Children are constantly observing the world around them and often live through imitation. If they observe you eating a variety of healthy foods and exercising on a regular basis, they will learn these habits and want to take care of their bodies as well. Avoid saying negative things about yourself and others. Hearing you say, "I am so fat," will lead children to question themselves as well, leading to a low self-esteem. Teach them to love their bodies for what they are.

There is more to a party than the menu

When adults are invited to a party one of the first things they wonder is what will be offered to eat. On the other hand, when children have a party coming up they wonder what games they will play and how much fun they will have. Don't feel threatened by social events if you are trying to lose weight. Keep in the front of your mind that they are for *socializing* first and foremost.

Make mealtimes enjoyable

Children require assistance with eating when they are younger, so they connect mealtimes with being surrounded by family. Eating as a family at the table is a rarity these days. Make an effort to sit down together and talk about each other's days.

It is no fun sitting around

It is not often that you see a child sitting around. They live to run around, explore, play games, and laugh with others. As they get older television, computers, and video games tend to become their playground. Limit how much time your child spends doing these activities, and limit yourself as well. Get up and explore your world more often by enjoying activities together.

Give yourself a bedtime

Children are raised with set bedtimes, allowing them to adjust to a fixed schedule and wake up feeling rested. Rarely can adults say the same. Limit yourself and set a bedtime. What doesn't get done is still going to be there tomorrow and adults are much more efficient after a good night sleep.

Live in the present moment

You don't hear kids worrying about something that has already happened or something they have no control over. They enjoy the present day, whether it is playing catch with dog, digging for worms out in the yard, or finding the best hiding spot for a game of hide-n-seek. Adults would benefit from relaxing and taking life day by day. Stop and smell the flowers and don't sweat the small stuff.



We can learn a lot from our kids!!!



Adapted from the *Am I Hungry? Multidimensional Weight Management System* developed by Michelle May, M.D., A Board Certified Family Physician.

For more information, visit: www.AmIHungry.com